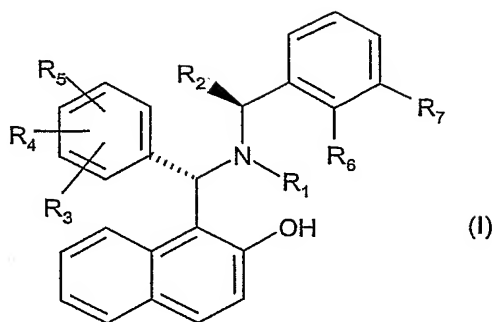


What is claimed is:

1. A compound of the formula



wherein

$R_1$  is optionally substituted lower alkyl or aralkyl;

$R_2$  is optionally substituted lower alkyl;

$R_3$  and  $R_4$  are independently hydrogen, halo, lower alkyl, alkoxy or trifluoromethyl; or

$R_3$  and  $R_4$  combined together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form an optionally substituted fused 6-membered aromatic ring provided that  $R_3$  and  $R_4$  are attached to carbon atoms adjacent to each other;

$R_5$  is hydrogen, lower alkyl, lower alkoxy or halo;

$R_6$  and  $R_7$  are hydrogen; or

$R_6$  and  $R_7$  combined together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form a fused 6-membered aromatic ring;

provided that

(i)  $R_3$ ,  $R_4$ ,  $R_5$ ,  $R_6$  and  $R_7$  are not hydrogen when  $R_1$  is methyl, ethyl, pentyl, allyl, 3-buten-1-yl, benzyl or phenethyl and  $R_2$  is methyl; or

(ii)  $R_3$ ,  $R_4$ ,  $R_6$  and  $R_7$  are not hydrogen when  $R_1$  and  $R_2$  are methyl and  $R_5$  is methyl located at the 4-position;

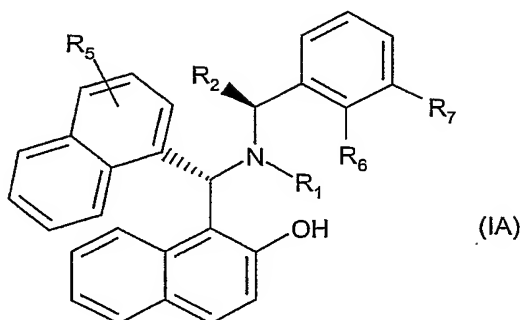
or an enantiomer thereof; or an enantiomeric mixture thereof.

2. A compound according to claim 1, wherein

$R_3$  and  $R_4$  combined together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form an optionally substituted fused 6-membered aromatic ring provided that  $R_3$  and  $R_4$  are attached to carbon atoms adjacent to each other;

or an enantiomer thereof; or an enantiomeric mixture thereof.

3. A compound according to claim 2 of the formula



wherein

$R_1$  is optionally substituted  $C_{1-4}$ alkyl;

$R_2$  is methyl;

$R_5$  is hydrogen;

$R_6$  and  $R_7$  are hydrogen; or

$R_6$  and  $R_7$  combined together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form a fused 6-membered aromatic ring;  
or an enantiomer thereof; or an enantiomeric mixture thereof.

4. A compound according to claim 3, wherein

$R_6$  and  $R_7$  are hydrogen;

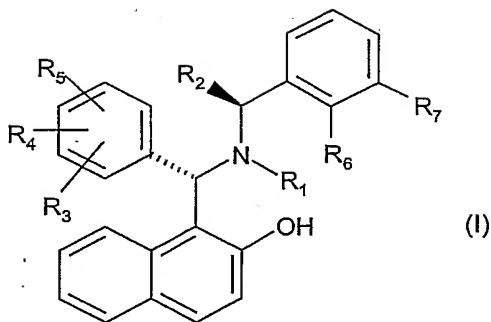
or an enantiomer thereof; or an enantiomeric mixture thereof.

5. A compound according to claim 4, wherein

$R_1$  is methyl;

or an enantiomer thereof; or an enantiomeric mixture thereof.

6. A method for converting a carbonyl compound to a chiral alcohol in the presence of a suitable organozinc reagent and a compound of the formula



wherein

$R_1$  is optionally substituted lower alkyl or aralkyl;

$R_2$  is optionally substituted lower alkyl;

$R_3$  and  $R_4$  are independently hydrogen, halo, lower alkyl, alkoxy or trifluoromethyl; or

$R_3$  and  $R_4$  combined together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form an optionally substituted fused 6-membered aromatic ring provided that  $R_3$  and  $R_4$  are attached to carbon atoms adjacent to each other;

$R_5$  is hydrogen, lower alkyl, lower alkoxy or halo;

$R_6$  and  $R_7$  are hydrogen; or

$R_6$  and  $R_7$  combined together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form a fused 6-membered aromatic ring; provided that

(i)  $R_3$ ,  $R_4$ ,  $R_5$ ,  $R_6$  and  $R_7$  are not hydrogen when  $R_1$  is methyl, ethyl, pentyl, allyl, 3-buten-1-yl, benzyl or phenethyl and  $R_2$  is methyl; or

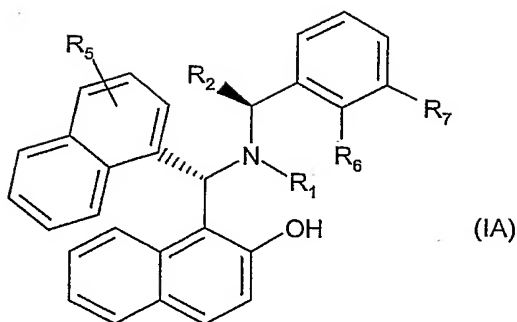
(ii)  $R_3$ ,  $R_4$ ,  $R_6$  and  $R_7$  are not hydrogen when  $R_1$  and  $R_2$  are methyl and  $R_5$  is methyl located at the 4-position;

or an enantiomer thereof; or an enantiomeric mixture thereof.

7. A method according to claim 6, wherein

$R_3$  and  $R_4$  combined together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form an optionally substituted fused 6-membered aromatic ring provided that  $R_3$  and  $R_4$  are attached to carbon atoms adjacent to each other; or an enantiomer thereof; or an enantiomeric mixture thereof.

8. A method according to claim 7, wherein a compound of formula (I) has the formula



wherein

$R_1$  is optionally substituted  $C_{1-4}$ alkyl;

$R_2$  is methyl;

$R_5$  is hydrogen;

$R_6$  and  $R_7$  are hydrogen; or

$R_6$  and  $R_7$  combined together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form a fused 6-membered aromatic ring;  
or an enantiomer thereof; or an enantiomeric mixture thereof.

9. A method according to claim 8, wherein

$R_6$  and  $R_7$  are hydrogen;

or an enantiomer thereof; or an enantiomeric mixture thereof.

10. A method according to claim 9, wherein

$R_1$  is methyl;

or an enantiomer thereof; or an enantiomeric mixture thereof.

11. A method according to claim 6, wherein the carbonyl compound is an aromatic aldehyde.

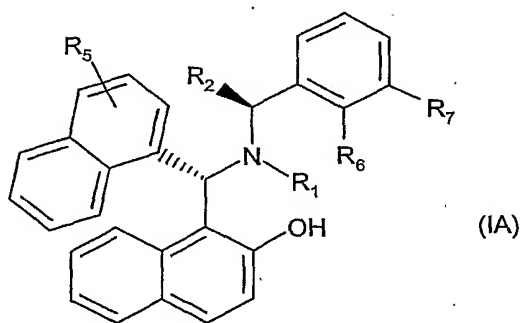
12. A method according to claim 11, wherein the chiral alcohol is a diarylmethanol.

13. A method according to claim 12, wherein the organozinc reagent is generated by reacting a compound of the formula



wherein  $R_8$  represents aryl; with dimethyl zinc or diethyl zinc.

14. A method according to claim 12, wherein the reaction mixture further comprises a polyether.
15. A method according to claim 14, wherein the polyether is dimethoxypolyethylene glycol.
16. A method according to claim 12, wherein  
 $R_3$  and  $R_4$  combined together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form an optionally substituted fused 6-membered aromatic ring provided that  $R_3$  and  $R_4$  are attached to carbon atoms adjacent to each other;  
 or an enantiomer thereof; or an enantiomeric mixture thereof.
17. A method according to claim 16, wherein a compound of formula (I) has the formula



wherein

- $R_1$  is optionally substituted  $C_{1-4}$ alkyl;
  - $R_2$  is methyl;
  - $R_5$  is hydrogen;
  - $R_6$  and  $R_7$  are hydrogen; or
  - $R_6$  and  $R_7$  combined together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form a fused 6-membered aromatic ring;
  - or an enantiomer thereof; or an enantiomeric mixture thereof.
18. A method according to claim 17, wherein  
 $R_6$  and  $R_7$  are hydrogen;  
 or an enantiomer thereof; or an enantiomeric mixture thereof.
19. A method according to claim 18, wherein

$R_1$  is methyl;  
or an enantiomer thereof; or an enantiomeric mixture thereof.

20. A method according to claim 6, wherein the reaction mixture further comprises a polyether.

21. A method according to claim 18, wherein the polyether is dimethoxypolyethylene glycol.